

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

~~SECRET~~
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
Intelligence Note - 195
MAR 20 10 39 AM '69
March 19, 1969

To : The Secretary
Through: S/S
From : INR - Thomas L. Hughes *tlh*
Subject: New Directions in the Maghreb

Diplomatic activity in the Maghreb has quickened since the successful visit in January of Algerian President Houari Boumediene to Morocco. "Non-alignment" is again the watchword in Morocco and Algeria--although not yet in Tunisia or Libya. While this new climate may place some limits on Soviet influence, it can also have significant drawbacks for the US. But the enhanced stability it provides an area important to US interests may be worth the risks.

New Mood in the Maghreb. The Moroccan-Algerian rapprochement has been the major agent of change.¹ Apparently determined to live up to the friendship treaty they signed in January, Morocco and Algeria have now signed a financial accord. Both have been seeking to promote a Maghreb summit to bring Tunisia and Libya into line. The advent of a new administration in Washington, the Nixon-de Gaulle talks, and the suggestion of Spanish Foreign Minister Castiella that the Mediterranean be cleared of both the US and Soviet fleets have contributed to an atmosphere of international ferment that has affected the mood in the Maghreb.

Morocco Searching for New Partners. Since France suspended a good part of its aid following the Ben Barka affair in late 1965, Morocco has been seeking more diplomatic latitude. The June 1967 war in the Middle East--and

¹See Intelligence Note 42, "Boumediene's Visit to Morocco: A New Era in Moroccan-Algerian Relations," January 24, 1969 (~~CONFIDENTIAL~~)

SECRET
NO FORN DISSEM
CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

protracted US delays in honoring a commitment in 1967 to supply \$14 million in arms--induced Morocco to seek a more neutralist coloration in its diplomacy. One result has been a gradual warming in Morocco's relations with the USSR, reflected in increased trade and economic assistance. The Moroccans are now looking forward to a visit by Soviet President Nikolai Podgorny in April in the hope of obtaining more economic assistance for their new five-year plan. Moroccan Foreign Minister Ahmed Laraki has also expressed interest in a "Mediterranean pact" that he apparently sees as growing out of the Castiella proposal. At the same time, the Moroccans have been probing for an invitation for King Hassan to visit Washington.

Algeria Seeking Alternatives. Algeria is also trying to avoid too great a dependence on either of its major aid donors--France or the USSR. Stung by Western criticism of increasing Algerian dependence on the USSR, Boumediene has moved to demonstrate his independence by bettering relations with his conservative neighbors. To draw a rein on the Soviets, the Algerians have sought more French military assistance and have agreed to a visit by French Foreign Minister Debre in May. They, as well as the Moroccans, are now preparing to receive Podgorny and probably hope this will help keep the French on their toes. To keep both countries in line they have hinted at an improvement in relations with the US and have recently received a private delegation of Americans interested in increased trade.

Tunisia and Libya More Cautious. Tunisia and Libya have been less quick to respond to these new currents. Tunisia fears, moreover, that Algeria

SECRET
NO FORN DISSEM
CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
September 6, 2007

SECRET
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

- 3 -

and Morocco may be trying to impose a new pattern on the Maghreb. In January the Tunisians obtained some promising results in talks with the Algerians on economic cooperation. Later, however, the Algerians attempted to force through a quick border settlement, with the predictable result that the Tunisians dug in their heels. Both Tunisia and Libya have been seeking nonetheless to broaden their diplomatic options. Tunisia has been moving ahead on its rapprochement with France.¹ Libya, having recently signed a friendship treaty with Algeria, is scheduling visits for the spring by Crown Prince Hassan al-Rida to its Maghreb neighbors and to France.

Implications for the US. The move towards "non-alignment" resulting from the Moroccan-Algerian rapprochement may have more immediate drawbacks for the US than for the USSR. Although Morocco apparently interprets the new relationship as calling for more Soviet and neutralist influence in its foreign policy, Algeria has not shown a corresponding interest in moving closer to the US or other Western countries. Boumediene has recently branded the US Sixth Fleet--but not the Soviet Fleet--as "dangerous" to its independence. Even so, Algeria's decision to improve relations with its neighbors probably constitutes a significant commitment to stabilizing an area long torn by rivalries and suspicions and in which the US retains important interests.

¹See Intelligence Note 91, "Franco-Tunisian Rapprochement: Interests Converging," February 14, 1969. ~~CONFIDENTIAL (NO FOREIGN DISSEM)~~

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]